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ABSTRACT

As individuals read, they construct meaning at various levels, including literal, interpretive, and critical. One part of this comprehension act is creative reading, which may be promoted by self-questioning so that students become personally involved in the material they read. To guide students' self-questioning strategies, teachers can both pose questions that require readers to go beyond textual implications and model subtasks, such as asking and answering inferential questions, finding clues to substantiate inferential questions, and explaining the relationship of clues to answer. Teachers can also provide students with a problem-solving schema for comprehending complex short stories. A possible approach to encouraging continuity in self-questioning and responding is recreational reading in the content areas, thus encouraging students to select their own materials and to read at their own pace. Personal questioning is not the only way of encouraging creative thought, however, and creative reading does not replace other aspects of the comprehension act. (DF)

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Creative Reading through Self-Questioning

by Dr. Joseph Sanacore

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> Might it not be crucial to help our children feel confident about communicating the worth of their inner selves to the world of others, rather than insisting to them that a person's worth can only be measured by "right answers"? Rogers (1983, p. 67)

Rogers' question is directed to the broad area of enriching creative growth, but it also has implications for stimulating creative reading. As individuals interact with texts, they attempt to construct meaning at presumably different levels, including literal, interpretive, and critical (or evaluative). Another important part of the comprehension act is creative reading. This paper is concerned with providing insights about creative reading and with promoting its use through personal self-questioning.

What Is Creative Reading?

In A Dictionary of Reading and Related Terms (Harris and Hodges, 1981, p. 72), creative reading is defined as "the process of gaining new insights in reading by identifying salient ideas, recombining them in novel ways, and relating them imaginatively to experience..."

According to Gray (1960) creative thinking is a quality of mind inherent in comprehension, critical evaluation, and assimilation. Creative thinking during reading concerns the imaginative treatment of concepts and generates different ideas, new insights, and diverse patterns of thought. The act of reading, then, becomes an act of discovery, and it results in personal, intrinsic motives for reading and studying.

Rosenblatt (1978) also discusses aesthetic aspects of reading. In literary reading, for example, the individual responds to texts, such as short stories, novels, and plays. During this transaction between reader and text, the reader applies an interpretation based on his/her perceptions, attitudes, and feelings as they relate to the reader's imagination. In contrast, nonaesthetic or efferent reading is primarily for solving problems or acquiring information. However, a clear distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading is not possible because both types of reading experiences are based on varied purposes. Sometimes, these purposes support each other because an individual may read for information and simultaneously relish the experience. Also, a resource may be informational for one student and creative for another, or it may be experienced efferently at one time and read aesthetically on another occasion. (Chaplin, 1982)

Other aspects of creativity, which have implications for creative reading, are presented by Torrance (1962); they are elaboration, originality, fluency, flexibility, synthesis, and closure. In relating these characteristics to the creative reading process, the reader is likely to fuse them with his/her affective and cognitive background. In this context, elaboration suggests applying pertinent details to an author's ideas; originality suggests contributing unique extensions to an author's thesis; fluency suggests conjuring up many thoughts concerning the text; flexibility suggests thinking about varied ideas related to the text; synthesis suggests blending more than one thought into a broader, related concept; and closure suggests reflecting on the completed reading assignment over a period of time to provide opportunities for using the text as a basis for generating authentic ideas.

These thoughts concerning creative thinking and reading provide a useful foundation for encouraging students to think creatively during reading activities. However, Bass (1982), well known for his work with the Oscar-winning documentary film "Why Man Creates," also provides insights about what is needed to function creatively. The individual, for instance, is expected to be brave, free, and playful as he/she is initially committed to a premise. Then, the individual views the premise with objectivity, discipline,

and judgment; thus, he/she might ask, "What happened? What's useful? Or not useful? How does it relate to what I want to accomplish eventually and to what my objectives are for this particular exercise?" (p.73) Finally, the individual moves toward the creation of a form, such as a piece of writing. According to Bass, the process of functioning creatively is painful, since it can lead to uncertainty and anxiety; yet, it also can be joyful and exhilarating.

These definitions and perspectives concerning creative thinking and reading support the need for a classroom environment that is relaxed, that stimulates discovery, that provides suitable structure in the form of individual guidance, and that rewards risk-taking whether or not it leads to satisfied outcomes. In addition, students need to realize that they have creative insights that they can learn to apply to the reading act. With this milieu established, the teacher and students are more likely to engage in personalized activities related to creative reading.

Encouraging Creative Reading through Self-Questioning

One way of promoting creative reading is by motivating students to become personally involved in the material they read. The teacher can pose questions that require readers to go beyond textual implications and then can help these

learners to ask similar questions on their own. (Hillerich, 1983; Sanacore, 1985a; 1985b; Smith and Robinson, 1980) For example, after discussing literal, interpretive, and critical aspects of a story, the teacher might ask, "How would you have solved this problem?" (Smith and Robinson, 1980, p. 226) Imaginative responses reflect beginning stages of inquiry and should therefore be encouraged and praised often. As students develop confidence with their creative reactions, they should be guided to ask their own questions that help them to think beyond the author's text.

The teacher can guide students' self-questioning by modeling certain subtasks, such as showing learners how to ask and answer inferential questions, how to find textual clues to substantiate the inferential responses, and how to explain the relationship of the clues to the inferential answers. (Gordon and Pearson, 1983; Pearson, 1985) After modeling these subtasks, the teacher helps learners to practice them until student independence is demonstrated. During the guided practice, the teacher continues to ask inferential questions, while the students answer these questions, find clues, and relate the clues to the answers. Raphael's (1982, 1984) approach to inferencing is similar; however, she extends the process by having students create their own questions and then use the other subtasks. In this context, growth in creative reading reflects stages

ranging from initial teacher direction (or modeling) to eventual student independence (or ownership of the strategy).

Another way of guiding students' self-questioning strategies, which also supports a teacher-modeling to student-ownership transition, is suggested by Singer and Donlan (1982). According to these researchers, the teacher should provide students with a problem-solving schema for comprehending complex short stories, including the stories' plan, goal, action, obstacles, and outcomes reflecting failure or success. The teacher presents this schema with accompanying schema-general questions, encourages students to use these generalized questions to create their own story-specific questions, and motivates learners to read for the purpose of answering their own questions. Thus, the teacher might ask: "What is the leading character trying to accomplish in the story?" From this schema-general question, the student might generate a story-specific question, such as: "Will the barber kill the officer with the razor?"

The results of a study concerning this approach to self-questioning indicated that eleventh grade students learned to apply this problem-solving schema and related components to complex short stories; these students also improved their comprehension of complex narrative text. (Singer and Donlan, 1982)

This type of self-questioning reflects some creative

thinking and reading, since students actively construct meaning as they read. The teacher can further this approach by guiding students to create additional questions that stimulate personal, creative responses. For example, adapting a structure developed by Donlan and Singer (1979), the teacher can help learners to generate questions similar to the following: 1. The leading character -- If I were the leading character, what action would I have initiated? Why? 2. The goal -- What would I have strived for? What would I have learned about myself from the goal chosen and from the course of action taken? 3. The obstacles -- How would I have dealt with the obstacles? What would I have learned about myself from the ways in which I dealt with these obstacles? 4. The outcome -- Would I have been successful or unsuccessful in reaching the goal? Why? 5. The theme -- From the goal, obstacles, and outcome, what forces would I have struggled with (for example, myself, nature, other people)? Students' ability to devise these types of questions with accompanying responses is demonstrated through a variety of ways, including whole-class discussions, small-group activities, and individual conferences. As learners show facility and independence with their creative questions and reactions, the teacher should provide less direct guidance and should only monitor continuity in using the process.

One approach to encouraging continuity in self-questioning and responding is recreational reading in the content areas. This approach allows students to select a wide variety of materials in which they are interested and to read at their own comfortable pace. As individuals read and reflect on the content of their selections, they have opportunities to apply some of the self-questioning strategies discussed above. Although these strategies are especially applicable to narrative text, they also can be adapted to expository and descriptive discourse types. When reading these discourse types for pleasure, students can be motivated to create and respond to personal questions such as the following: 1. If I were the author, how would I have approached the problem? What would I have learned about myself from my approach to the problem? 2. What difficulties would I have experienced in dealing with the problem. How would I have dealt with these difficulties? What would I have learned about myself from the ways in which I dealt with these difficulties? 3. Would I have been successful or unsuccessful in dealing with the problem? Why? 4. Beyond these experiences, what additional challenges would I have encountered as the author (for instance, my personal lifestyle versus the problem to be researched)? These types of questions promote thinking at different levels while readers apply their emotional and intellectual

backgrounds to varied kinds of discourse. Students may elaborate on an author's ideas, suggest original approaches to dealing with an author's thesis, and synthesize concepts from a variety of sources into a broader, related concept (namely, the author's main thesis). Thus, recreational reading blended with personal questions and responses can help students better understand and appreciate varied texts, while these individuals go beyond textual implications and develop into independent readers. A caution, however, is not to require excessive questioning and responding, since overdoing this process could negate the principles of the recreational reading philosophy. Rather, students should be stimulated to read for pleasure and, at times, to apply their creative reading strategies. In addition, the teacher might encourage individuals to share their creative insights during peer-group discussions of books. More discussion about recreational reading in the content areas can be found in Sanacore (1983) and in Spiegel (1981).

In sum, creative reading reflects a variety of meanings, and it generates a sense of personal considerations for comprehending varied discourse types. One such consideration is self-questioning as a strategy for going beyond text. Personal questioning, however, is not the only way of encouraging creative thought; similarly, creative reading does not replace other aspects of the comprehension act.

In perspective, thinking creatively during reading is an important step that builds on other comprehension areas, and it should be stimulated frequently in a wide variety of ways.

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Figure 1.
Some Guidelines for Promoting
Creative Reading through Self-Questioning

1. Teacher motivates students to become personally involved with text by
   A. reminding them that risk-taking is acceptable behavior
   B. helping them to realize that their lifetime experiences, both personal and intellectual, can be helpful during the reading act

2. Teacher guides students to create their own reading-related questions by showing individuals how to
   A. pose interpretive questions
   B. respond to these questions
   C. locate clues in text to support the interpretive responses
   D. explain the link between the clues and the responses

3. Teacher continues to pose interpretive questions but encourages learners to practice the above subtasks in No. 2B, C, and D

4. Teacher guides students to develop independence in creating their own questions and in using the above subtasks in No. 2B, C, and D

5. Teacher provides students with a problem-solving schema for understanding complex short stories, including the stories' plan, goal, action, obstacles, and outcomes

6. Teacher shows this schema with related schema-general questions

7. Teacher motivates learners to use these schema-general questions to develop their own story-specific questions

8. Teacher encourages students to read for the purpose of answering their own questions

9. Teacher stimulates learners to generate additional questions that lead to personal, creative responses

10. Teacher monitors continuity in self-questioning and responding by providing students with opportunities to <u>apply</u> these strategies in the context of content area recreational reading

11. Teacher reminds students that self-questioning represents only one approach to creative reading

12. Teacher reminds learners that creative reading does not replace other parts of the comprehension act

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